

THE DISTRICT LINE® By Bill Gold

The Impossible Took A Little Longer

OVER THE years, uncounted hundreds of motorists have written to me to complain about traffic tieups

caused by the painting of lane lines.

"I know these white lines are necessary," the typical complaint would say, "but do they really have to do their painting during the busiest part of the day? Why can't they paint at night?"



Bill Gold

Heaven knows how many letters I have written in reply to such questions. I'd explain that lane lines are not usually put down "during the busiest part of the day," but after the morning rush hour and before the evening peak. I'd quote highway officials as saying that painting at night is "impossible" because the humidity doesn't permit the paint to dry or adhere properly.

The same complaints were reaching highway directors throughout the country, of course, and were being passed along to equipment manufacturers. The industry's reaction was that it was doing the difficult at once, but the impossible would take a little longer.

Today, I am happy to report, nocturnal painting of lane lines is no longer impossible. There are several new machines on the market that do the job, and there's about \$32,000 in the District's new budget to buy one of them.

Daniel J. Hanson, deputy director of our Highway Department, tells me that he

has seen a "Night-Liner" in action and that he fell in love with it at first sight. It has a special chamber for heating and processing paint just before it reaches the striping gun, with the result that the paint dries in about three minutes, even on cold pavement.

"We'll be able to do three times as much painting with this machine," Hanson told me. "It paints as fast as the vehicle moves—about 8 miles an hour—and you don't have to hire crews to put down a thousand traffic cones and then go back and pick them up after they have been impeding traffic for a number of hours. A couple of minutes after the paint hits the street, you can drive a truck or a bus over the line without smearing it."

Traffic engineers have long known that, dollar for dollar, you can get more effective traffic control out of a bucket of white paint than by any other method. So Hanson can hardly wait until his new machine is bought and put into service.

"Our lane lines last a year at best," he explains, "because they're subjected to heavy wear and so much salt and abrasives in the winter. But it's terribly important to renew the lines at regular intervals and keep traffic moving smoothly. I hope that very soon these painting tieups will be a thing of the past."

The plan is to paint downtown and on heavily traveled streets at night and then let a second crew use the new machine in suburban areas in the daytime. It sounds like a big \$32,000 worth.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAYS

Greetings to Walt Whitman Rostow (his 50th), C. C. McDev-

itt (his 70th), Gus Stern, Phil Ortega, Fire Lt. Bernard M. Bowerman, Robert J. (Rab) Edwards, Nelson L. McWilliams, Shirli Culpepper Mayhugh and Johnny Puleo.

4258

If you are mailing in a Give-Away listing, please be sure that you include your legibly written name and address. Do not abbreviate the name of your telephone exchange, if any; spell it out or translate it into digits. This reminder has been published 4258 times. Please cooperate.

GIVE-AWAYS

Two playful, fluffy, 9-week-old kittens; \$2 enclosed for Children's Hospital (Whitehall 6-7734 after 5:30 p.m.). Nine-month-old cat and/or her 3-month-old male kitten, both beautiful white, affectionate, housebroken (356-3707). Part-terrier female puppy, good with children (King 9-3379).

SHOPPING NOTE

If you'd like to throw a cold chill into your Christmas shopping, take a look at page 198 of the October issue of Esquire. It contains an ad for electronic snooping devices that's an eye-opener.

You can now buy (at nominal prices) a machine that "records telephone conversations even while recording system is completely unattended." Also a transmitter "only slightly larger than a thimble. Receives and sends signals from any telephone line unheard-of distances. Self-energizing."

The most horrifying device of all "picks up conversations in a designated area from any place in the world, via telephone. No radio transmission. No short-lived battery operation. Install transmitter to telephone either inside or outside lo-

cation under surveillance. You can pick up conversations within 60 feet of location by dialing number. Phone won't ring."

In other words, if you're holding a conversation in a place that's within 60 feet of the bugged phone, Big Brother may be listening. Nice thought, eh?

PERSONAL NOTES

Stephen J. Spingarn, 1929 Q st. nw.: The District Line column first appeared in January of 1947. The reminder to Give-Away customers about the legibly written name and address and the spelled-out name for telephone exchanges appeared daily for many years (and for part of that time I wrote seven columns a week). It is only in recent years that the reminder has appeared only once a week. Some of my oldtime readers may even recall that we had some fun with it years ago when it was published in a different language each day.

THE MALE ANIMAL

A disconsolate newsman at the National Press Club bar made only a feeble response when a friend greeted him. "What's the matter?" the friend asked. "You look awfully dejected."

"Oh, I don't know," the sad one said. "I just have the feeling that everybody is against me."

The other man rejected this notion at once. "Stop exaggerating," he said. "Everybody isn't against you—just the people who know you."

VAGRANT THOUGHT

Personally, I would have liked it better if Lester Mad-dox had decided not to run because he couldn't support Congressman Weltner.